

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

S & K Electronics

Montana Manufacturing Extension Center

ISO Registration Connects S&K with Customers

Client Profile:

S&K Electronics is a tribally-owned company that operates from a 40,000 square foot facility near Pablo, Montana. It houses an impressive array of new generation manufacturing and testing equipment, maintained and operated by highly skilled personnel, in high tech manufacturing. With over \$9 million in annual sales during a time when its industry sector has been going through tough times, S&K is also a valuable source of local employment for 128 people. In operation since 1984, S&K describes itself as a Technology Development Manufacturing Services (TDMS) provider, assisting customers from design through support of product realization.

Situation:

As a leading contract manufacturer of cable assemblies, wiring harnesses, electronic and electro-mechanical products for both industry and government-funded primes like Lockheed and Northrop, S&K Electronics operates in an industry where registration to the ISO standard is a universally recognized way to ensure that a company's products and processes meet strict quality guidelines. More and more, critical suppliers are required to improve operational efficiency and eliminate defects and waste to remain competitive. In an effort to do this, smaller manufacturers like S&K often perform to the standard but are dissuaded from pursuing full ISO/QS 9000 registration because of the time it takes and resources, financial and personnel, it requires. However, believing customer service is paramount, S&K committed to and met a very tight time frame for achieving ISO registration back in January when a customer asked it to supply parts for a line primarily used in commercial shipping in Europe that would require ISO registration in time for a June contract delivery date. Because of the short timeline, the company sought assistance from the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (MMEC), a NIST MEP network affiliate.

Solution:

MMEC specialists led S&K through the entire quality registration process, starting with a gap assessment of its Quality Management System and an informal on-site audit of how well their operation performance tracked with their documentation system. MMEC and the quality team were able to develop prioritized plans to close the gaps. The Center assisted in implementing plans and even helped with suggestions for a registrar when the UL audit organization, the company that S&K normally worked with, was unable to meet the short timeline to perform an audit. While the MMEC project helped S&K achieve ISO 9001 registration in less than four months, retaining certification requires discipline, and managements resolve and participation is paramount. S&K management backs it 100 percent, noting that there is a cost, but it goes back to continuous improvement and having tools like ISO to identify issues early on and set goals to improve. The biggest challenge of implementation at S&K was adopting change. The company provided education and training with the help of MMEC to establishing everyone at a level of understanding. It held group meetings on the concepts of why it was doing it and the opportunities to help build on its own strengths, including ISO,

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to be competitive. A staff member received training to be a certified as an internal auditor and become the internal ISO champion.

Results:

- * Achieved ISO 9001 registration.
- * Increased sales by 10 percent.
- * Awarded a \$500,000 contract.
- * Obtained a reliable tool for monitoring and improving quality in 26 procedural areas.

Testimonial:

"The Center [MMEC] was very thorough and capable in helping us. I consider MMEC a catalyst for companies to come up to speed on their own."

Larry Hall, President & General Manager